

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 287 129

CG 020 258

TITLE Parents and Schools: A Shared Responsibility.
INSTITUTION Los Angeles Unified School District, CA. Office of Instruction.
REPORT NO GC-96-1983
PUB DATE 83
NOTE 36p.
AVAILABLE FROM Instructional Publications, Los Angeles Unified School District, 450 N. Grand Avenue, Room G-390, Los Angeles, CA 90012 (\$.75).
PUB TYPE Guides - General (050)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Attendance; Curriculum Development; Discipline Policy; Elementary Secondary Education; *Parent Responsibility; *Parent School Relationship; School Districts; *School Policy; *School Responsibility; Teaching Methods

ABSTRACT

This document presents guidelines developed by the Los Angeles Unified School District to help strengthen support from parents, the community, and community leaders for the school district's programs. It provides a statement regarding school and parent responsibilities and suggestions for how the school staff and parents, working together, may contribute to the improvement of the instructional program. Suggestions outlined in the paper are to serve as a reference for schools. Twelve major areas of consideration regarding the responsibilities of parents and schools in improving the district's instructional programs are identified: (1) curriculum and instructional materials; (2) testing programs; (3) enrichment, remediation, and special programs; (4) learning styles and teaching strategies; (5) learning environment; (6) high expectations; (7) marking practices; (8) attendance policies; (9) promotional requirements; (10) homework; (11) graduation requirements; and (12) discipline. For each of these areas, a brief description of the goal is given and separate sets of responsibilities are listed under the headings of School Responsibilities and Parent Responsibilities. A list of resource materials is included. (NB)

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**PARENTS &
SCHOOLS**

A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

GUIDELINES

**LOS ANGELES
UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
OFFICE OF INSTRUCTION
Publication No. GC-96-1983**

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LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

FOREWORD

Parent and Schools: A Shared Responsibility is a vital component of the District Superintendent's Basic Activities¹ programs. The purpose of this publication is to implement:

GOAL 3: STRENGTHEN THE SUPPORT FROM PARENTS AND THE COMMUNITY AT LARGE AND ITS LEADERS FOR OUR PROGRAM.

ACTIVITY B

STATES: The District, with the assistance of parents, students, teachers, administrators, and community representatives will develop, for distribution by each school, a statement regarding school and parent responsibilities and suggestions for how the school staff and parents, working together, may contribute to the improvement of the instructional program.

The suggestions outlined in this publication are to serve as a reference for schools to use in implementing Activity B, Goal 3. Many District publications, already in schools, are also referenced and may serve in assisting schools in planning activities.

The Districtwide committee identified major areas of consideration regarding the responsibilities of students, parents, and schools in improving the District's instructional programs. The following topics are addressed:

Curriculum and Instructional Materials

Marking Practices

Testing Programs

Attendance Policies

Enrichment, Remediation, and Special Programs

Promotional Requirements

Learning Styles and Teaching Strategies

Homework

Learning Environment

Graduation Requirements

High Expectations

Discipline

These identified topics may serve as the basis for the initial planning by the staff members of most schools. Schools may wish to augment the above listed subject areas to meet individual school needs.

¹Basic Activities (Los Angeles Unified School District, Office of the Superintendent, 1982).

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Office of Instruction expresses its appreciation for the contributions of the following students, parents, teachers, administrators, specialists, advisors, and central staff personnel in the preparation of this publication:

Student Representation

Rosalyn Terry
Vicky Alvarez
Denise York

Parent/Community Representation

Carole Keen
Peggy Barber
Myrtle Middleton
Velma Smith
Hortencia Lopez
Charlotte Castagnola
Virginia Saenz
Irma Granger

Teacher Representation

Francis Haywood
Day Higuchi
Belinda Norkus
Marv Katz

Administrators' Organization Representation

Yvonne Chavez
Robert Kladifko
Phyllis Smith

Region Representation

Dr. Ruben Zacarias
Lorna Round
Tamotsu Ikeda
Don Bolton

Classified Representation

Varnell Lewis
Donna Zamor

Central Staff Representation

Robert Hamada
Marguerite May
Eva Grant
Norm Rossell

Special recognition is offered to Lawrence Moore, Program Coordinator, Specially Funded Activities, for his leadership in coordinating the development of this publication.

APPROVED:

JOSEPH P. LINSOMB
Associate Superintendent
Instruction

ROSALYN S. HEYMAN
Assistant Superintendent
Office of Secondary Instruction

LORNA ROUND
Assistant Superintendent
Office of Elementary Instruction

RESPONSIBILITIES OF SCHOOLS AND PARENTS

Area of Responsibility: Curriculum and Instructional Materials

For many years one of the major goals of the District has been to involve parents and other citizens in determining "the educational needs of students and community," to establish a corresponding curriculum, and to provide instructional materials that fit the needs of both.² Once decisions have been made with respect to the District's instructional program, school staffs and parents alike share the responsibility of knowing the program content and of insuring that all students have equal opportunities to experience a balanced program of instruction. To that end, the following responsibilities are numerated:

School Responsibilities

1. Send regular written statements describing the instructional program to students and parents.
2. Conduct in-service training classes for parents describing the District's curriculum and instructional program.
3. Teach objectives of the courses.
4. Use understandable language (both the English language and the language best understood by parents, where feasible) in all communications and meetings where the instructional program is discussed.
5. Provide parents with suggested ways to help their children gain the necessary knowledge and skills in the curriculum.
6. Compile a list of suggested readings on learning and motivation for use by parents.

Parent Responsibilities

1. Read bulletins and other information regarding the instructional program that are provided by the school and District.
2. Attend meetings and in-service training classes in which the District's curriculum is reviewed.
3. Know the course objectives related to District guidelines for instruction.
4. Become familiar with the District's instructional program by reviewing school and District publications which describe the curriculum.
5. Guide children's learning and encourage them to do their best to gain the necessary knowledge and skills.
6. Take an active part in helping to strengthen the instructional program of the school by volunteering to provide classroom assistance, helping as needed in the ongoing instructional program and the selection of instructional materials, and assisting in other ways when called upon.

²A Statement of Goals, (Los Angeles Unified School District: Instructional Planning Division, Pub. No. GC-31, 1975), p.8

Area of Responsibility: Testing Programs

The California Education Code requires school districts to establish standards of proficiency in reading comprehension, written composition, and mathematics computation; to measure students' mastery of these skills; and to keep parents apprised of their children's academic progress. In Los Angeles, the mastery of the above skills is measured in elementary schools by the "Survey of Essential Skills" (SES); in grades 7-8 by the "Proficiency Assessment in Reading" (PAIR), the "Assessment of Computational Skills" (ASC), and "WRITE: Junior High"; and in grades 9-12 the "Senior High Assessment of Reading Proficiency" (SHARP), the "Test of Proficiency in Computational Skills" (TOPICS), and "WRITE: Senior High." Also used in measuring students' academic progress are the following tests: (1) The California Assessment Program" (CAP), which is administered at grades three, six, eight, and twelve; (2) the "Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills" (CTBS), which is given to students in grades three, five, eight, and eleven; and (3) other tests which are used to measure the achievement of all students in Chapter I and other specially funded programs. School staffs and parents have the following significant responsibilities with respect to these testing programs:

School Responsibilities

1. Keep parents informed of the various testing programs and schedules.
2. Help parents and students understand the importance of the testing program and the seriousness with which it should be taken.
3. Provide parents with suggestions for helping their children succeed on tests and other aspects of the instructional program.
4. Provide parents with specific information on their children's test performance.

Parent Responsibilities

1. Become informed about the testing programs, schedules, and the purposes of each test.
2. Help children understand the importance of testing and encourage them to take the testing program seriously.
3. Help children understand the importance of being prepared for tests and of going to school rested and in the proper frame of mind at all times, especially during testing periods.
4. Find out how well the children have done on various tests and encourage them to improve.

Areas of Responsibility: Enrichment, Remediation, and Special Programs

The District provides many special programs to meet the unique needs of students who require help to achieve their highest potential. Some of these programs are ECIA Chapter 1 and 2; bilingual education-ESL; gifted and talented programs; special education; integration options--Predominately Hispanic, Black, Asian and other non-Anglo student curriculum programs (PHBAO) including permits with transportation; and magnet schools and centers. Additional available programs are elective classes at the secondary level, continuation high schools, opportunity centers, and schools of choice. These programs make it possible to enrich learning for students who require challenges and who need unique learning opportunities to remain motivated and interested in school. These programs also provide special assistance to students who need help in mastering basic skills, in adapting to various handicaps, and in overcoming other problems which may keep them from succeeding in school.

School Responsibilities

1. Identify students for special learning opportunities, and screen and evaluate students for special needs at the earliest possible time.
2. Work closely with parents in the identification of students' unique needs and seek parent cooperation in the selection of special programs or in the appropriate placement of students.
3. Obtain the help of appropriate District resource personnel in screening students for special programs.
4. Inform parents of local school programs which may be of special interest to them and their children, such as the gifted and talented program and such District programs as magnet schools, preparatory schools, and the Permits With Transportation program.
5. Encourage parents to provide special assistance where appropriate (for example, help with homework, tutorial assistance, enrichment experiences).
6. Develop a systematic procedure for identifying students who show marked and sudden changes in citizenship marks, attendance, and attitude.

Parent Responsibilities

1. Notify the school staff of any special needs which children may have (for example, physical or emotional problems or the need for enrichment through gifted/talented programs or special interest clubs).
2. Cooperate with the school staff in attempting to identify and implement plans which will help students with special needs to succeed in school.
3. Work closely with District resource personnel in helping students take advantage of special programs and offerings.
4. Know about the various learning options which are available to students in the District.
5. Seek ways to meet children's educational needs through provision of learning activities out of school.
6. Be aware of any marked or sudden changes in the students' behavior towards school as demonstrated by citizenship marks, attendance, and academic achievement.

Areas of Responsibility: Learning Styles and Teaching Strategies

Recent research indicates that most people learn best in a particular way or combination of ways. A student may learn best through his or her sense of sight or of hearing or of touch; many people use all three senses in learning new materials and in mastering instructional tasks. This finding suggests that educators and parents alike need to know about various learning styles and accommodate instruction to the specific ways in which students learn.

School Responsibilities

1. Provide staff development related to current research in learning theories.
2. Identify the learning styles of students.
3. Provide instruction, especially initial instruction, in a variety of ways in an effort to meet the needs of all students.
4. Use a variety of media and methodologies to insure that students experience many approaches to learning.
5. Identify the dominant teaching approach in which individual teachers present instruction so as to assist them in varying their approach.

Parent Responsibilities

1. Learn about currently accepted theories and the ways in which children learn.
2. Be aware of the ways in which their children learn best.
3. Provide opportunities for children to have a variety of out-of-school learning experiences, such as visits to museums and other places of interest.
4. To the degree possible, provide a variety of reading and other enrichment materials in the home.
5. Take an ongoing interest in children's school work and provide support and encouragement for them to do their best.

Area of Responsibility: Learning Environment

One of the Superintendent's major goals for the District is to "improve the environment in which teaching and learning occur."³ This is a major undertaking that will require constant effort on the part of the school staff, students, and parents. It includes such significant activities as combatting campus violence and vandalism, providing adequate campus security, emphasizing the importance of school pride, establishing school behavior codes, organizing a "school beautiful" program, and using community resources in achieving these objectives. It is essential that school staffs and parents take an active part in improving the learning environment.

School Responsibilities

1. Develop high standards of student behavior and have high expectations with respect to student performance.
2. Provide school assemblies and other programs which encourage students to respect their school and the people in it.
3. Evaluate campus security and teach children personal safety concepts.
4. Develop ways to reduce or eliminate vandalism and take immediate steps to repair any damage that occurs.
5. Organize various programs to enhance the appearance of the school and encourage active student participation in such programs.
6. Call upon members of the community to assist with antiviolence and antivandalism programs and to help with school beautification efforts.
7. Encourage activities that perpetuate a pleasant school climate, stimulate healthy learning environments, promote positive attitudes for students and staff, and beautify the school.

Parent Responsibilities

1. Support the school's efforts to establish behavior standards and expect children to do well in school.
2. Assist in building school pride by participating in various school programs and activities.
3. Instruct children to use safe routes and practices in going to and coming home from school and to follow basic safety practices at home and school.
4. Help children understand the importance of protecting the school environment and assisting in the elimination of vandalism.
5. Volunteer to assist with school beautification efforts and encourage children to help maintain an attractive school and campus.
6. Assist the school in capitalizing on individuals and businesses who might contribute time and resources to school beautification efforts.
7. Support activities that encourage students to participate actively in positive school climate programs relating to student behavior and school beautification.

³ Basic Activities, p. 8.

Area of Responsibility: High Expectations

In virtually every recent study of effective schools, a significant finding is that student achievement is highest when school staffs and parents have high expectations regarding what students can accomplish, with respect to both their behavior and their learning. Where codes of conduct are established and enforced, where the curriculum is clearly understood by all concerned, and where high levels of classroom performance prevail, students are far more apt to master the skills and obtain the knowledge that are necessary for success in school and ultimately in the world outside of school. Regardless of students' socioeconomic status or other outside factors, it is vital to understand that nearly all students can learn what is to be learned and behave in ways that will contribute to the overall quality of the instructional program.

School Responsibilities

1. Expect all students to master content for the grade or course and be certain that the objectives and the content are clear to students.
2. Provide parents and students with ongoing information regarding student mastery of the content of the instructional program.
3. Provide immediate help for students who require additional assistance to achieve grade or course objectives.
4. Observe the District's promotion policy with respect to appropriate retention or promotion of students.
5. Use established District reporting practices and policies in keeping parents informed about students achievement, effort, and citizenship.
6. Develop and publish codes of conduct reflecting the behavior that is expected of all students in the school.

Parent Responsibilities

1. Cooperate with the school staff in the development of behavior standards and emphasize the importance of children's meeting the standards.
2. Know what is expected of children with respect to the curriculum.
3. Remain in close contact with the schools and follow up on suggestions to strengthen children's learning.
4. Provide out-of-school help to students who need additional assistance to meet academic expectations.
5. Support the recommendations of the school staff on the retention or promotion of a child.
6. Review school reports with children and encourage them to make improvement in those areas where it is needed.

Area of Responsibility: Marking Practices

The District has adopted criteria for marking students from kindergarten to twelfth grade. It is essential that school personnel communicate to students and parents the established District criteria for assessing and reporting student progress. It is important that parents and students understand the meaning of the marking symbols, the bases for evaluating student achievement, and the intent of the marks that are used to report student progress.

School Responsibilities

1. Inform parents in advance of progress reporting dates.
2. Inform parents of the standards and responsibilities of teachers assigning student marks.
3. Provide staff development for teachers in marking policies and practices including strategies for motivating students to achieve.
4. Provide standards and expectations that are reasonable for each child and are the highest that are attainable for each child.
5. Ensure that each child is aware of the District's standards and expectations.

Parent Responsibilities

1. Know dates of progress reports and parent-teacher conferences. Attend conferences scheduled by the school.
2. Become informed of marking policies and practices through contact with school advisory council and P.T.A. and through literature sent home.
3. Become and remain aware of each child's progress in school. Some indicators of progress are the Survey of Essential Skills (SES), report cards, progress reports, and proficiency test results.
4. Know teacher standards and expectations for each child.
5. Support the school in ensuring that each child is aware of the District's standards and expectations and is making every effort to meet them.

Area of Responsibility: Homework

Homework can be an important resource in helping pupils learn and should be included as part of their educational program. Beginning in kindergarten, homework may be increased as the pupil progresses through the grade levels. Meaningful homework may be assigned in all areas of the curriculum. Time allotments for assignments have been suggested through District publications for schools to utilize in developing a schedule for homework. It is important that school staff, parents, and other community members plan a school homework program that is appropriate to meet the needs of the students.

School Responsibilities

1. Implement within District guidelines a schoolwide homework schedule.
2. Inform parents and students of the school homework schedule.
3. Encourage parents to provide a study environment favorable to complete homework assignments.
4. Give homework assignments that are appropriate to student learning needs and that require a reasonable amount of time to complete. Explain each homework assignment clearly and thoroughly.
5. Assign homework which reinforces or supplements what has been taught.

Parent Responsibilities

1. Know and support the homework schedule for each child's program.
2. Support the concept that the actual doing of homework is the student's responsibility.
3. Make every reasonable effort to provide a study place for students to complete homework assignments.
4. Expect that homework assignments be appropriate, reasonable, and challenging.
5. Communicate to each child's teacher or teachers any difficulty that the child experiences in completing homework assignments.

Area of Responsibility: Requirements for Promotion

It is the policy of the Los Angeles Unified School District that the promotion of a student reflect reasonable progress toward mastery of those academic skills essential to becoming a functional adult in American society.

School Responsibilities

1. Inform staff, parents, and students about District policies on promotion and the school's implementation of these policies.
2. Assess each student's educational needs and provide appropriate learning activities to meet those needs.
3. Make sure that each student knows the standards for promotion.
4. Provide remediation for those students who need it.
5. Follow required curriculum for instruction in each grade or course.
6. Comply with District policies for promotion and retention of students.

Parent Responsibilities

1. Be aware of District policies on promotion and know how the school implements these policies.
2. Know the student's educational needs.
3. Become and remain informed of the progress each child is making toward meeting promotional requirements.
4. Know the District's policy requirements for promotion of students.
5. Be aware of curriculum requirements for instruction for the student.
6. Confer with the teacher or counselor when there is an indication that a child is not making adequate progress. Some indications of performance are the Survey of Essential Skills scores, subject matter marks, and marks in work habits and citizenship.

Area of Responsibility: Attendance

Because instructional time is costly and continuity of instruction is necessary for efficient learning, it is imperative that all segments of the school community do their utmost to encourage regular attendance.

School Responsibilities

1. Have all school personnel show concern to students about absence.
2. Inform staff, parents, and students of District school attendance reporting procedures and policies.
3. Require that attendance reporting procedures be followed strictly, and monitor adherence to those procedures at regular intervals.
4. Implement a system of incentives for students who maintain good attendance.
5. Encourage the development of curriculum and learning activities which will motivate student attendance.

Parent Responsibilities

1. Instill in children the value of regular attendance.
2. Establish a regular schedule of rest and nutrition to help each child arrive at school ready for instruction.
3. Become and remain aware of attendance policies, readmittance procedures, and other procedures related to absences.
4. Make sure that each child knows and follows established readmittance procedures.
5. Follow established procedures for informing the school of reasons for each child's absences.

Area of Responsibility: Graduation Requirements

Diplomas are awarded to junior high school students who satisfactorily complete the required course of study and to senior high school students who pass all of their proficiency tests and satisfactorily complete the required course of study. Participation in graduation ceremonies is contingent upon a student's meeting school citizenship standards, as well as qualifying for the diploma.

School Responsibilities

1. Inform parents of requirements for graduation and for participation in graduation activities.
2. Comply with District standards for the awarding of diplomas and graduation.
3. Establish procedures for informing students about graduation requirements.
4. Meet regularly with students to discuss and review graduation requirements.
5. Develop and implement a systematic procedure for informing parents of student progress toward grade or credit standard.
6. Confer with parents of students who are not meeting graduation requirements.

Parent Responsibilities

1. Become and remain informed of the requirements for awarding the diploma and participation in graduation activities.
2. Be informed of the progress each child in secondary school is making towards meeting diploma and graduation requirements.
3. Ensure that each child in secondary school is doing his or her best to meet graduation and diploma requirements.

Area of Responsibility: Discipline

Discipline is controlled behavior calculated to develop within an individual responsibility for his or her own actions in accordance with socially accepted conduct. The initial stages of discipline are maintained by external control or adult direction. The degree to which the individual progresses in self-control determines the need for external controls. Thus, the school's and parents' shared responsibility is to assist students to become mature and capable of self-control, the ultimate goal of discipline.

School Responsibilities

1. Keep unauthorized persons from entering or remaining on school grounds.
2. Promote mutual respect and courtesy between students and between students and adults.
3. Hold students strictly accountable to standards of citizenship in class and on school grounds and while traveling to and from school.
4. Maintain a classroom environment conducive to learning.
5. Minimize disruption of teaching and learning in the classroom.

Parent Responsibilities

1. Insist upon a good, safe environment for learning at each school.
2. Encourage mutual respect and courtesy among family members, peers, and adults.
3. Expect and encourage each child to conform to school standards of good citizenship.
4. Follow up on any report of a child's failure to conform to standards of good citizenship.
5. Make every reasonable effort to ensure that a child who has not conformed to school standards of good citizenship will do so in the future.

RESOURCE MATERIALS

California Education Code

Excused School Absences and Class/Homework Make-up Assignments. Los Angeles Unified School District: Office of Instruction, Bulletin No. 15, February 21, 1980, p. 2.

Guidelines for Assignment of Homework for Elementary and Secondary Schools. Los Angeles Unified School District: Instructional Planning Division, Publication No. GC-67, 1978.

Marking Practices and Procedures for Elementary and Secondary Schools, An Instructional Bulletin. Los Angeles Unified School District: Instructional Planning Division, Publication No. GC-74, 1978.

Marking Procedures and Graduation and Diploma Guidelines (Grades 7-12). Los Angeles Unified School District: Office of Instruction, Bulletin No. 10 (Revised), December 15, 1982.

Notification of Parent or Guardian Regarding Possible Failure of Pupils. Los Angeles Unified School District: Division of Educational Support Services, Bulletin No. 20 (Revised), March 5, 1981.

Reporting Students' Progress. Los Angeles Unified School District: Office of Instruction, Bulletin No. 24 (Revised) July 29, 1982, pp. 4-7.

Revised Guidelines for Assignment of Homework. Los Angeles Unified School District: Office of Instruction, Bulletin No. 22, May 5, 1981.

Secondary School Curriculum Guidelines for Instruction: Administrative Directives and Curricular Information. Los Angeles Unified School District: Instructional Planning Division, Publication No. SC-769.1, 1979.

Student Rights and Responsibilities. Los Angeles Unified School District: Office of Communications, Revised 1983.

Who's Responsible? Los Angeles Unified School District: Instructional Planning Division, 1974.